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AF/FO, AF/S AND NSC FOR AFRICA SR DIR FRAZER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SE](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICANS SEE SLOW PROGRESS TOWARD ZIMBABWE
DIALOGUE

Classified By: Joseph G. Sullivan for reasons 1.5b/d

1. (c) South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Ndou told the Ambassador June 17 that talks about talks between ZANU-PF and the MDC continued with both sides agreed on need to resume their dialogue. Ndou said that some talks had already occurred between the two sides prior to the June 2-6 stayaway and more had been scheduled for the week when planning for the stayaway and GOZ reaction interrupted the process. Ndou said that President Mbeki had urged the MDC not to go ahead with the stayaway and was upset when the MDC opted for the mass action. He said that the SAG had urged the GOZ not to over-react to the MDC actions. Ndou said the GOZ was also upset over the MDC mass action and this was why Tsvangirai was detained. Ndou said that both sides remained committed to talks, however, as the only way out of the crisis. Ndou said that the talks remained mostly about talks, rather than about the substance of differences. He said the SAG was urging ZANU-PF to move to public meetings with the MDC as a way to lock in the dialogue process and get public credit for it. As it were, both sides were arguing that radicals in their own parties opposed dialogue with the other party. Ndou said that one potential formula could have talks focus on constitutional reforms as a way to deal with concrete reform issues rather than have every issue become a straight political dispute between ZANU-PF and the MDC.

2. (c) Ndou said he believed that it was now clear that Mugabe's departure as President was part of any dialogue. The subject had been touched on during the three Presidents' visit to Harare last month and Mugabe's public call for an open campaign for succession had brought the debate out of the closet. Ndou said that ZANU-PF, of course, believed that succession meant a transition from one ZANU-PF President to another; ZANU-PF did not expect that MDC could ever win an election or govern the country because of its lack of liberation war credentials. Ndou discounted a June 17 "Daily News" account that Mugabe had told President Mbeki that Parliamentary Speaker Emmerson Mnangagwa was his chosen successor. Ndou said that tribal rivalries made ZANU succession much more complicated with Mugabe reluctant to choose a Karanga(Shona sub-group) like Mnangagwa. In the absence of a qualified Zezeru(Mugabe's Shona sub-group), it was more likely that a Manica(a Shona speaker from Manicaland) like Simba Makoni or even an Ndebele would be chosen as a transitional leader. Ndou said that these same tribal rivalries made ZANU more open to a constitutional reform which distributed power controlled so tightly in the presidency among a number of positions, including a Prime Ministry, a stronger Parliament, etc.

3. (c) The Ambassador underlined USG anger over Tsvangirai's continued detention and deliberate humiliation on no credible grounds other than Mugabe's wish to hold him. He urged that the South Africans exert every effort to secure his release. Ndou said that the SAG had urged Tsvangirai's release and had urged the MDC to raise the need for Tsvangirai's release as essential for productive negotiations.

4.(c) Comment: It is clear that the South Africans continue to work this issue. (President Mbeki called while I was with Ndou.) It is less clear how hard they are pushing Mugabe and whether Mugabe and ZANU-PF see any urgency to dialogue or are stringing the process along. And this is before anyone has really gotten into the substance of the negotiations themselves.

SULLIVAN